

**New Year's
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New Year's Resolutions: Defining the "WILL" in Willpower

If you're planning to make changes in your health and lifestyle this New Year, you may also be thinking about willpower and how you're going to find enough of it to stick to your resolutions. It may surprise you that much of what we think we know about willpower is actually a myth. For example, many people believe that willpower is the essential ingredient for success, but this is not entirely true. While self-discipline plays a small role in behavior change, there are other important factors to consider.

Why Willpower Alone Doesn't Work

Willpower is not a consistent, steady source of fuel for change because it's based in large part on our emotional state, which naturally fluctuates. When your emotional resolve to "do better" fades – as it undoubtedly will from time to time – your willpower fades, too. If you rely solely on willpower and you meet a real-life temptation (like donuts in the break room) or an obstacle (like a rain storm on the day you vowed to walk outdoors), you're more likely to slip back into old habits and then berate yourself for not having enough willpower to make the right decision. This creates a negative, self-defeating cycle that can actually keep you locked into unhealthy behaviors.

What to Do Instead

Whether you want to lose weight, eat better, exercise more, manage stress or take on any other aspect of wellness, long term change is based on many common success strategies. Consider these tried-and-true tips as you embrace your personal health-improvement project.

1. **Know your motivator** – and keep it in sight. First, ask yourself: "Why is it important to me right now to make this change?" As long as you have at least one answer to this question – and it's really meaningful to you – then you can manage the hard work of behavior change. The key is to continuously remind yourself of your motivator(s) so you have the "fuel" to keep at it, especially when the going gets tough.
2. **Set SMART goals.** Make long term goals for a few months down the road, and short term goals that focus on small daily



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or weekly action steps. Both your long and short term goals should follow the SMART format: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic and Time-based. Here's an example:

NOT a smart goal: I'll start exercising again this week.

SMART short term goal: I will use the treadmill for 20 minutes on Tuesday and Thursday.

Be sure to set goals that you are reasonably confident you can achieve. It's better to promise yourself something manageable and have success with it than to make an unrealistic goal you may not achieve.

3. Identify your obstacles and prepare a few strategies before you meet them. Once you set your goals, it's important to think about obstacles that could derail your success, and to plan workable strategies to overcome them before you are faced with them. For example, if your goal is to stop smoking and you know you will see a friend who smokes, outline the steps you need to take to stay on the right track. If you have trouble coming up with strategies, ask other people in your situation what they have done, or look to your own strengths and solutions you used in the past to overcome a challenge.

4. Reward your "wins" along the way. It's important to acknowledge your progress along the way, even when you feel your accomplishments are small or are just what you "should have been doing" all along. When you recognize your efforts and their positive outcomes, you'll increase your self-confidence and refresh your inspiration. Success breeds success!

www.webmd.com

Need extra help to achieve your New Year's resolutions? Start the year off right with our Lifestyle Improvement Programs on Nutrition, Exercise, Smoking Cessation and more! Log in to **MyBlueService** from www.bcbsfl.com and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Select **Wellness Programs** to get started today!



Ask the Coach

Q Every time I walk or run for exercise, I get shin splints. How can I prevent this?

A Shin splints are characterized by pain in the front part of the lower leg, below the knee and along the shin bone, and can be a result of several factors. One common cause of shin splints is tightness or weakness in the muscles on the front side of your lower leg. Daily stretching and strengthening of these muscles can help prevent shin pain. Another possible cause of your shin splints is wearing shoes that are too small. Unlike your regular everyday shoes, there should be a thumb's distance between your big toe and the end of your exercise shoes.

www.acefitness.org

Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

Sausage Lentil Soup

In many cultures, it's customary to eat foods symbolic of "good fortune" on New Year's Day to ensure a prosperous year. Foods like cooked greens and legumes are considered "lucky" because the leaves look like folded money and beans resemble coins when they swell during cooking. Eating pork on New Year's Day is also customary because it is thought that pigs symbolize progress. Cover all the bases and make this delicious dish of good fortune this New Year!

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- ¼ lb reduced-fat smoked sausage, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 medium carrot, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cans (14 ½ ounces each) reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ⅓ cup water
- 1 cup dried lentils, rinsed
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 can (14 ½ ounces) stewed tomatoes, cut up
- 1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 cup chopped fresh spinach

Preparation

In a large saucepan coated with cooking spray, cook and stir onion and celery over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. Add the sausage, carrot and garlic; cook 2-3 minutes or until onion is tender.

Stir in the broth, water, lentils, oregano, cumin and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 25-30 minutes or until lentils and vegetables are tender. Stir in the tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce and spinach; cook until thoroughly heated and spinach is wilted. Makes 6 servings.

Nutritional analysis:

Calories: 180, Fat: 1 (trace saturated fat); Cholesterol: 7 mg; Sodium: 639 mg; Carbohydrates: 31 g; Fiber: 12 g; Protein: 14 g.



Looking for delicious, healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy? Check out our Healthy Recipes from WebMD! Simply log in to MyBlueService from bcbsfl.com and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Click on **My Health Manager** and under Healthy Fun, select **Healthy Recipes**.

Cold and Flu Season: Overcoming the Dreaded Bug

It's that time of year again. No, not the holidays...we made it through them already! 'Tis the season of colds and flu. Maybe you've had your flu shot (or not), but you're still concerned about getting sick, and rightfully so. The more you're around sick people, the greater your chance of catching one of these nasty bugs. Taking the following precautions can significantly lessen your likelihood of getting the cold or flu this season.

- Wash your hands well and often. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Wipe down frequently touched surfaces (telephone, cell phone, laptop, stair rails, television remote control) at least once a week with an anti-microbial wipe.
- Avoid the triangle. No, not the Bermuda triangle. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth between hand washings.
- Avoid sick people (when possible).
- Aim for 8. Eight hours of sleep daily can help your body to resist illness.
- Eat a healthy diet, particularly one including five servings of fruits and veggies daily, to get the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that keep you healthy.
- Use a humidifier to keep your mucus membranes moist. When they crack, viruses and bacteria are more likely to get in.

If even your best efforts fail and you feel like you're coming down with something, start treating symptoms right away. While you can't cure the common cold or flu (they're viruses, so antibiotics do not work on them), you can definitely lessen the duration of suffering.

Drink lots of fluids. This allows the mucus to flow. Aim for at least eight 8 ounce glasses of water daily. Hot drinks and soups count, too.

Get plenty of rest. You're most contagious in the first 48 hours and it's likely you've been burning the candle at both ends, so give your body a break.

Cough and blow to get the phlegm out. Gently blow your nose as often as possible and don't suppress your cough if you don't have to.



Gargle salt. Salt promotes healing of inflamed tissue, so gargle with ½ teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water three times a day.

Take an over the counter medicine. Single ingredient products can really help lessen the symptoms of a cold or flu, but only take when needed and as directed. Make sure to read the warning labels and ask your pharmacist about drug interactions if you take other medications.

When to Seek Medical Treatment

Sometimes it's tough to determine if you have a cold or the flu. Generally headache, fever and extreme fatigue are more characteristic of the flu. Regardless, seek medical attention if you have a fever over 104 degrees F (102 degrees for infants or adults 65 and older); your symptoms last longer than 10 days; you're having trouble breathing or it sounds like wheezing; you have a very sore and red throat or you see white patches; or if you experience extreme pain in the neck, ears or sinuses.

With a lot of diligence and a little luck, you can survive the cold and flu season!

www.cdc.gov